

Pioneering High-Tech Burglary Reduction Trial Launches in Watford

North Watford is to become the first area in the UK to trial an advanced high tech burglary reduction scheme.

Hertfordshire Constabulary is piloting the scheme, which uses encrypted microparticles to 'mark' home owners' assets so they can easily be identified, in 1,000 homes in the town over the Summer. The scheme is the result of collaboration between Hertfordshire Constabulary and technology companies RedWeb Security and MyThings™. Similar schemes have already been implemented successfully in the USA.

At the heart of the scheme is enigmaTag™, an asset marking product, based on encrypted microparticles, which are difficult to break or replicate, developed by RedWeb Security, a specialist in DNA-based crime prevention solutions. enigmaTag will be supplied in a small bottle to participating householders, who will be asked to paint a tiny amount onto valuable belongings, such as computers, digital cameras, jewellery and antiques.

They will also register details of the marked belongings in a 'portfolio' set up for each participating household on the MyThings website. MyThings (www.mythings.com) is a free asset management website, which enables owners to create a secure and detailed portfolio of all their belongings in an anonymous environment. In case of theft or loss, details of the items will be easier to report to the police and insurance companies. It will also be easier to identify and recover stolen property, as the descriptions, serial numbers and images of the items are all held in the participants' anonymous and secure portfolio.

As part of the trial, Hertfordshire Constabulary is encouraging participants to register all their valuables, including those marked with enigmaTag, on the MyThings website. MyThings and Hertfordshire Constabulary have created a special page for North Watford householders taking part in the trial, which may be found at (<http://www.mythings.com/HertsPolice>).

The enigmaTag fluid in each bottle has its own unique code and each code will be registered on a central owners' database held by the Police. Handheld scanners, available only to Hertfordshire Constabulary, will enable them to identify instantaneously the code hidden in the enigmaTag fluid and compare it with the details in the MyThings portfolio to identify stolen items and return them to their rightful owners. They will also be able to investigate when items with different codes are found in a property being searched by the Police.

Chief Constable Frank Whiteley said: "Every burglary has a victim and we're committed to utilise technological advances to catch those people responsible for stealing people's personal possessions and invading their homes. We're also working closely with the Watford Community Safety Partnership and you, the public, to reduce the number of burglaries. But we need your help to prevent them happening in the first place."

Yasmin Batliwala, Chair of the Community Safety Partnership, said: “Once again we’re leading the way in dealing with crime so that our neighbourhoods continue to be safe. We support this exciting new initiative which is yet another tool in helping us to tackle crime.”

Principal Scenes of Crime Officer, Doug Bain, who has managed the enigmaTag trial in North Watford, says: “It’s a really simple scheme for householders to participate in and has the potential to offer major benefits in terms of burglary prevention. Our pilot is the first implementation of its kind in the UK and we’ve worked with the product owners to evolve an evidential system which will assist us in realising what we hope will be a significant reduction in burglaries in the trial area as a direct result.”

Clive Smith, Chairman of RedWeb Security, commented: “enigmaTag is an unrivalled detection tool and we believe it has the potential to act as a significant crime prevention tool. We’re very much looking forward to working with Hertfordshire Constabulary on this first UK trial.”

“We are pleased to participate in such a broad and thorough approach to reducing theft,” added Alexandra Smith, MyThings Sales Director. “We understand how much people care about their most precious possessions and are committed to giving them all the tools they need to protect them.”

The enigmaTag bottle comes complete with “Thieves Beware” stickers for residents to put on their doors/windows as a warning to potential burglars.

North Watford Neighbourhood Sergeant Julie Storey, says: “We hope we will be able to reunite people with their stolen property but, more importantly, we hope the scheme will act as a deterrent to opportunist thieves.”

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Don't make it easy for burglars to enter your home - always use the key and double lock the door, even at night. If you have a vulnerable or elderly relative or friend, remind them of the importance of securely locking their doors and windows. This is a simple precaution that can help prevent your home being burgled.

Hertfordshire Constabulary also advises residents to:

- Always have an escape plan in case of fire and ensure everyone in the household knows where the keys are kept.
- Use a letter cage on your letterbox for additional reassurance.
- Lock all doors and shut ALL windows when you go out.

-Ends-

Note to editors:

We do not wish to divulge the exact location in North Watford to deter potential burglars from choosing to target neighbouring wards.

For further information and pictures, please contact Ailsa Roe, Western Area Press & PR Officer, in Corporate Communication on 01923 472080